

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Frey Hails Bia Rejection Of Tribal Recognition Bid



HARTFORD - State Rep. John H. Frey, R-Ridgefield, praised the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for giving final rejection on Wednesday, October 12 to the recognition bids of the Schaghticoke tribe and the Eastern Pequot tribe in Connecticut. Rep. Frey said he's confident any potential appeals of Wednesday's ruling would be vigorously fought by the state in court.

Rep. Frey noted that federal recognition allows a tribe to open a casino and that gaming proponents have long sought to open a casino in Western Connecticut. The Kent-based Schaghticoke Tribal Nation received preliminary federal recognition in January 2004 but the BIA overturned that decision in May of this year. In an internal memo written by BIA staff two weeks before the preliminary determination, BIA staff admitted that the Schaghticoke Tribe did not meet the criterion for recognition and would not have been granted federal recognition if the BIA adhered to federal law and precedent.

"This is tremendous news for the people of Western Connecticut," said Rep. Frey, who serves as an Assistant Minority Leader. "It shows the positive impact Connecticut's state and federal and local officials can have when they work together. The Schaghticoke tribe simply does not meet requirements for recognition. Something like this has clearly brought to light how flawed the recognition process had been in the past."

As a delegate to the Republican National Convention in New York, NY in August 2004, Rep. Frey proposed language to amend the party's national platform to reform the recognition process and make it more transparent. His proposal was unanimously adopted by the national Republican Party.

Rep. Frey, one of the Legislature's most vocal opponents of expanding casino gaming, said the ruling will serve as a significant blow to those hoping to open additional casinos in Connecticut.

"I don't expect supporters of casino gaming to completely abandon their efforts here," said Rep. Frey. "However, we know that if the federal recognition process is a fair and open one, it will not be easy for them to succeed. I'm also extremely proud of Governor Rell for how effectively she led the state's opposition to these recognition applications."